

Stranger Times by DrStrangerThings

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Language: English

Characters: Billy (Stranger Things), Callahan (Stranger Things), Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Florence "Flo" (Stranger Things), Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Max (Stranger Things), Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Powell (Stranger Things), Steve Harrington, Ted Wheeler, Troy (Stranger Things), Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven & Mike Wheeler, Jim "Chief" Hopper & Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

Michael Wheeler goes in the woods for The Daily Search, the ritual that he now must perform, since that eventful November week. What happens that January afternoon is something he would never see coming, Something that will change all that he knows forever

Stranger Times

Author's Note:

Thanks for clicking on this, and deciding to read >
This is the first chapter of my planned multi-installment fic, and I wanted to bring a concept unique to this story. Please leave feedback in the comments on your predictions and what you may want to see later on! Cheers!

January 26th, 1984

Last period, class would be over soon. 10 Minutes to go, tick tock tick tock tick tock...

Gray outside, snow was falling. Mike wanted to be out there, he wanted to be looking, to be searching for clues. No more time to be wasted, every day was going to be the day, he thought. Every single, goddamn day.

He could hear the mumblings of the teacher in the background of his crammed-up mind. It was a substitute, better for him then. No Mr. Clarke. Now, he could contemplate where him and the boys would go today. *Which patch of land to explore, which locale would have better chances?* It was all too much, sometimes he secretly wished for a break, but that didn't matter. Those were clumsy thoughts.

He breathed a sigh of heaviness, exhausted. Across the room was Dustin, who glanced towards him and gave a knowing smile. Then he nodded towards the clock. Mike nodded back in appreciation, at least they understood now. They understood the urgency that had no limit, a ticking clock with no alarm bell. It was a silent need, a mute necessity. Mike looked at his own Calculator watch, to make sure the digits matched up. Had to be sure, always.

The teacher scrawled in skittish letters the assigned work for that evening. Mike couldn't even bear to glance at that board, without lingering to what it once witnessed. They did a damn fine job fixing it quick, he thought to himself with solemn tones. The whole classroom

was a witness to a scene all the other kids would never learn about. On their return to school soon after that fateful night, they had been afraid to enter. Though they would have to face it together, no matter what...what had been lost.

Sitting right beside him was Lucas, his head buried into the desk. Silent snoring could be felt. I'll let him be for now, Mike looked on with a tired smile. He liked the familiarity of it all, normal, dull classes. Going to each other's houses, building snow forts, it was like it had always been. But not completely. No, that was too much to wish for. Never could that come back in whole. When you saw what they had witnessed in that week, everything was different.

It showed, Will wasn't in class, again. At lunchtime, they looked at his empty seat, all of them hoping their friend could show up. He did come to class sometimes, but it wasn't the Will Byers they knew who attended. Only after class and in privacy he smiled, and he laughed. They understood why, and it was in solemn comfort that they accepted it. How would it feel to be the boy who came back to life? How would you feel to have everyone look at you with narrowed eyes, with silent accusations and rumors? Even with friends at your side, the struggle laid with you.

They could only begin to imagine what Will Byers was going through, what he was afraid to cough up.

THE BYERS RESIDENCE

Ticktickticktick. His friends would be leaving class right about now. Maybe they had stayed to play around with the Heathkit. But knowing Mike, there was no time for that nowadays. There was only the need to mark the calendar.

Will coughed with a muffled ache into the closest tissue rag he could find. Balls of the white stuff lay all underneath his bedsheets. He had to hide them, or else his mom would have a fit. She said it wouldn't do any good for his cold. She called it a cold. Winter time blues combined with not wearing his mittens and cap exposed him to the frigid, that was the justification. He knew that it was anything but.

Will grabbed the flashlight from the night table again. It was a Nitecore, and very bright. His father left it a few years ago, and it

was the same one that his friends used when going into the forest sometimes. He had another use for it, though, one that they would never learn about. I'm starting to cough again, I...need to see, he thought to himself in a dazed fashion. Everything was so fuzzy, like a picture shown through a trashed tv set. A haze across his field of view.

He slowly shoved the bed covers off his chest, sighing a breath of exhaustion when he reached his knees. I have to go on..time to get up. Then he continued, thinking of the pizza Jonathan promised to bring over soon. I'm going to be happy for them today, mom and Jonathan, I want to see them smile.

With a gasp of strained air, Will pulled his knees over the side of the bed and hunched over, looking at his speckled socks. He forgot to take them off in the bed, he always usually did. Why not this time? He had no clue. The cold surface of the flashlight lay in his left hand. Finally, with one final leap, Will took off from the bed.

I need to find the bathroom. Where would I find that? Why don't I know...., Will stumbled around. Everything was so dark, but it was still the daytime. It confused him. Now, he could swear he saw vines on the wallpaper in his room. No, no, merely phantoms of the mind. The mind was complicated. It was the nervous system. The brain, his brain...was...it...was so so strange. Nothing...what...why

Darkness.

Light.

Dark..

JONATHAN! MOM!

EL!

Will Byers sank into a world of shadows.

EL...

EL!

EL!

Mike scrambled through the frigid terrain of the southern Hawkins swath. Dustin and Lucas lagged behind, small plumes of icy breath spreading into the air, blown away to lands beyond. Their footfalls were the only distinct noises in this area, it was desolate and barren. The forest was hibernating, sleeping with a dozy lull.

“Mike..maybe we should, uh, check the Sinkwood trail. That’s closer to where...well, we might have better luck in those parts”, Dustin rubbed together his flushed hands at the speed of light. Today he had forgotten to bring his mitts, should have listened to mom.

“I know it’s cold, Dustin..just give me a little bit more time.” Mike glanced back, expecting a confirmation. Slowly, Dustin nodded his head. “Sure..but it’s friggin cold, man! Shit, should have brought my bubble jacket today.”

“That’s the one your grandma used to wear, right, Dustin?” Lucas chuckled, shivering. He turned over a giant rock, only to find it stuck to dead roots.

“Shut up, ya beanhead.”, Shoving Lucas against a tree trunk. They started to play fight..again.

Mike took it as an opportunity to move a bit more ahead without them following. There was a ridge, he could remember, that overlooked a small stream. Maybe..maybe..she went around here once? He had found all that she...that El,..had left behind when she had been with them. The wig...an old Eggos box...a teared shred from that frilly pink dress she wore. Mike grinned at that...oh...what he would do to see her again. What he would pay for one of those moments.

Mike glanced back over to his friends. They were still bickering, like all close friends would. These were the times that made him feel lucky, the ones that he wished he could capture. But it wasn’t perfect, nothing was. Not the reason why they were there in the first place.

Slowly, Mike unzipped his backpack and searched through it for the special little pad. Once he got a hold of it, he pulled it out, cleaning off the thick paper cover. “**CALENDAR 1984**” it read, this was the most important item to him. It was a reminder of success and failure, of setbacks and triumphs.

Flipping it to the first month, he took a glimpse of all the bright red X’s placed from 1 to 25. Some of the dates had little notes placed within, these were the special days.

-January 5th (Found eggo box; Crushed)

-January 13th (Wig! Is she close?)

-January 15th (Nothing; I felt her presence; she is near)

-January 22nd (Searched all forest; will repeat now)

The calendar was the raw statistics of the task, Mike's daily search. He had his journal for his deepest thoughts, the things only his eyes would ever see. One day he would stop writing in it, when he got her back. When he could feel happy again, and not like a sucked-up soul, like a burden to everyone around him. Mike shook his head, no luck today. With the red marker from his He-Man pencil box, the boy placed a fragile cross throughout January 26th. Soon the next blank page will come, February, and then beyond...

He started to turn back towards Dustin and Lucas, stumbling across a small patch of dried ice. But then, a noise came. Like a hum from somewhere deeper than just out in the open. It was from within something, within a sort of tunnel. It gave him goosebumps.

Mike felt at a sort of crossroads. I'm done for today, I can look at it some other day, his rational mind spoke within the crevices of his consciousness. Now, though, that persistent character would have to be ignored. Michael Wheeler would not simply turn away from this.

Towards it he went, and steadily the hum hum hum grew louder and louder. It was thrumming underneath the frozen ground, a sort of unseen pathway forming. Seemed like a cave of a sort, below the ledge he knew of. Up ahead, the tall trees formed a clearing of sorts towards the forsaken little cliff. Once he reached the rocky terrain, he dropped his bag down below than jumped to a stable bed of pebbles. The humming, god, it was all around. The windy surround could not be heard anywhere. Now it was **hmmmmmmmmuuuuuummmmm**. Everywhere.

The sound fluctuated depending on where he turned his head, meaning he had to pinpoint exactly where it was strongest. His keen sense told him to go towards the left of the ridge, as he followed a tall, rocky wall. After a few seconds, he reached the source. Exactly as he thought. There was a small clearing inside the ledge wall. Not a cave, but a purposeful tunnel. It was recently created, perhaps it was meant for him to discover.

He knew exactly what it must have been, Nancy had told the stories a hundred times. It could appear anywhere, holes, holes to funny places. To places sideways and rightways and upside down ways. It

wasn't safe, they were there to tempt. Now, Mike would be ignorant to not go through. Imagine if he let her stay. This may have been the only chance. She could be there, waiting for me right now, he hoped and hoped. Gently, Mike placed his fingers and grabbed ahold inside the dark place. It was alive, alive with an electric feel. Pulsating from a greater force deeper within. Mike was scared, and also, excited..

He doesn't remember what happened next.

All Mike knew was that his friend was waiting inside. Not her, no, most definitely not.

The rescued one. Will. He was shouting something. Mike thinks he must have entered Will's dream. Or they were both there at the same time. All he knew was that this was the wrong hole to enter. Certainly a trick of some sort. *Will! Will! Can you hear...ahhh....hear.....ahh....Will....* Mike felt himself slipping out, green flashed most of all, there was also red and yellow. Will was gone now.

Light appeared again. Cold, frigidness. A hum he could hear, could have been his aching muscles.

Mike Wheeler fell on top of a patch of green, lush grass. Will Byers came back to his senses, in the cold comfort of his home.

At first, Mike was a bit confused. Some time had to have passed, there was no...no snow in sight. It was warm, he felt hot in his winter coat. His backpack was sagging from a humid feel.

"Dustin! Lucas!" He shouted over and over, as he made his way back to the treaded tracks him and his friends had came through. He looked everywhere, in all directions. Birds chirped and frogs croaked. This was...impossible. How long had he been in the hole? No way. No, no way. It was only January, and it was just frozen and snow was everywhere and a storm just happened. January 26, January 26. Oh god, did he go missing in there like Will? Were his parents searching for him, did they think he was dead? No, no, no..how much time had he wasted? No. No. No. No.

Panic, no, don't. I cannot panic, I will go back home, Mike breathed in and out.

He ran back to the road, it was..it was called Sinkwood or something like that. Dustin always remembered. After a short distance, he got to a clearing and saw where the road was. But..no bikes were there. They had left their bicycles somewhere here, but now he only saw a

bunch of trees in place. Shit. Shit. This was not very close to home. How would he get back? Maybe he could stop someone driving on the road. Perhaps, yes. He would try. He was only a kid, after all.

As he reached the road, he saw no street signs of any sort. But he knew this was the right place. The same curve of the pavement, it did look a bit more cleaner though.

After five minutes of waiting anxiously, he saw a pair of headlights in the distance to his left. It came slowly, but maybe that was just his mind playing tricks. He wasn't calm, that wasn't possible.

The car looked silver, and new. It looks like an expensive set of wheels, Mike thought to himself. In the driver's seat were two figures, and the driver brought the vehicle to a halt as Mike scrambled to the front window. It rolled down. A woman sat in the front passenger seat, presumably her husband or boyfriend besides her. She was about the age of his own mother, he could guess.

"Hey, what are you doing out here on your own? Are you lost?" She had a concerned look on her face. These were good people, yes, he was in fine hands. Mike nodded frantically, he must have looked like a wild kid.

"Yea..yea! I..uh.. I was here with my friends, and we were um, we were exploring the woods...but I don't know where they went..and..." He turned his head back to the tree line,.. "Well, my bike is gone, so I don't know what to do!" He looked back at them, praying they could take him back.

"Whoa, whoa, settle down there, son. We can drive you back. Where do you live? Hawkins municipality?" The man spoke in a firm voice.

"Yeah..that's where I am. Maple Street." Mike grabbed the back door handle and went in, the driver unlocking it from the front.

"Which part of Hawkin's is it?"

Mike was confused at that, it wasn't that big of a town. "Um..southern side, I guess." He took of his bag and plopped it onto the leather seats. It was a really nice car, he swore he never saw one like this before. Even the outside looked foreign.

“Oh, no worries, Tom, I’ll just search it up..” The lady said to Tom, the driver. “Oh, by the way, my name is Melissa” She smiled sweetly at Mike.

Distracted by his new surroundings, Mike took a while to notice. “Oh..uh..I’m Mike.. Mike Wheeler”

“We’re the Smiths. Expecting a kid soon, too..” She looked down towards her growing belly. “Well, you’re awfully trusting to strangers, Mike, do we give a friendly vibe?”

“Huh? Oh, well, I really need to get back home. Thanks for the ride.” He smiled nervously at the lady, his leg shaking. He just wanted to be back home, in comfortable surroundings.

“You don’t have a phone? To call your parents, that is..”

“Um..no? No, I have my walkie though.” He fumbled through his bag and pulled it out, showing her the old Realistic he used.

“Hah! Look, Tom, I didn’t know kids still used those.” She grabbed the walkie from Mike and showed it to her husband. “Wow, kiddo, is that your dad’s?”

“No..no. It’s mine, I got it from the Radioshack” He was starting to get confused, these people couldn’t be from Hawkins. No way.

“Radioshack?! I haven’t heard that name in forever. I thought it was extinct by now.” Tom chuckled to himself. “Seems like you have a keen sense for the retro. I like that”

“Kids these days are always glued to their screens, you wouldn’t believe it..” Melissa grinned to Mike.

“Well.. I sometimes play the Atari with my friends..not that much though.”

“Atari, Walkie Talkies, even your clothes, you’re a special kid” They both laughed. “Well, if you want to call your mom or dad, you can use my cell here.” Then, she took a metallic object from her purse and handed it over to him.

“What, what’s this?” He fumbled around with it. On the backside, the

word “SAMSUNG” was scrawled in small, silvery letters.

“Ah.. well, it’s an S4. I know, I know, it’s an older model. Still, it does what I need it to do.”

All this was foreign to him. These words didn’t make sense. What was going on? He put the Samsung thing on his lap. “Um..Mrs. Smith, what’s the date today?”

“June 10th. Um.. Mike, how long have you been here?” Now she was beginning to worry.

Mike had a startled look plastered on. June 10th?! That’s impossible, no, no, no. What happened, it was all a dream. Time to wake up, Mike. But at that moment, something caught his eye. It lay there in the armrest between the two passengers at front. Folded neatly, still fresh from the press. A newspaper.

Mike grabbed it slowly, unfolding it, as Melissa took notice. “Mike? How long?” He remained silent, eyes still pressed to the digits that were on the top of front page

INDIANA DAILY.

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That was the end of Mike Wheeler’s normal life.